

Perfin Update – Which Cuban Perfins Remain Unidentified?

Robert Littrell (#3992)

As the International Cuban Philatelic Society webmaster (www.cubafil.org), I consider it my duty to help members exhibit the results of their labors on the Members' Pages of the site. I solicited a number of members to include exhibits of their choosing. I asked one of our distinguished members, Rudy Roy, to help with submission of material on Cuban perfins. We created a page entitled "Perfins on the Stamps of Cuba – Rudy Roy's Pictorial Exhibition of Cuban Perforated Insignia Stamps." He has been a perfin collector for about forty years and was one of the first to write on the subject of Cuban perfins. The result of my involvement in this project is my budding interest in the subject.

As of this writing in December 2011, there are 23 private companies known to have perforated Cuban stamps. When Laura and Agustin Cantens, founders of the Cuban Philatelic Society of America, wrote the first two articles on Cuban perfins,^(1,2) they only identified twelve perfins, and only one of those by the name of the company: **SARRA** for Droguería Sarrá. Three months later, Rudy Roy wrote an article⁽³⁾ positively identifying three from covers, tentatively identifying three others by firm, and announcing the discovery of four new perfins –

O&C, QHC, M&Co and ENC. He asked for help in the identification process.

Of course the only way to positively do that is to find a perfin on cover with initials that match a previously unidentified one. But mistakes do happen, and sometimes somebody's conjecture becomes established fact by repetition. The first misidentification happened when Rudy Roy reported that William McPherson Jones had written to him identifying the **monogram AC** perfin as belonging to the American Club of Havana.⁽⁴⁾ It was reported three years later as being "positively identified" as that of the American Club in Havana.⁽⁵⁾ It was again repeated in a 1992 Cuban Philatelist article.⁽⁶⁾ It was even wrongly identified in the *World Perfins Catalog*, not as the American Club, but as Avery and Company.⁽⁷⁾ The first correct public identification as Armour & Co. was by Fernández and Díaz in 2003.⁽⁸⁾ This is proved by the cover of **Compañía Armour de Cuba** shown in Figure 1. Figure 2 shows the reverse side of an Armour & Co. perfin.

In his 2001 article,⁽⁹⁾ Rudy Roy stated that only one new Cuban perfin had been identified in the previous ten years, that being **QHC** for **Quiñones Hardware Corporation**. The following were said

to be unidentified: **A&C, ENC, FRCo, JLL, M&Co., NPT, O&C** and, on Pagos de Estado revenue stamps only, **J.F.B&Co.** Let us look at these and others in turn.

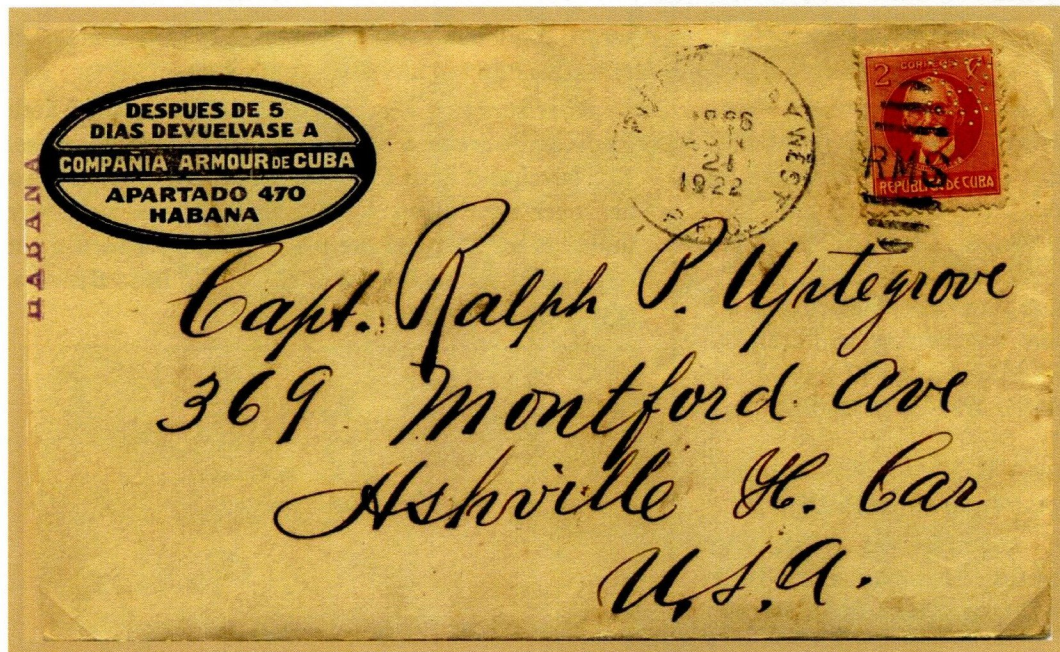


Figure 1

Armour & Company, Havana, Cuba, cover.
Franked with 2-centavo stamp with AC perfin.
Ft. Pierce & Key West RPO - Mobile Post Office Society USRPO postmark 392-A-1.
(Approximately 90% of actual size.)

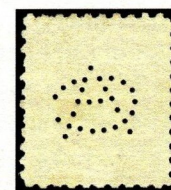


Figure 2
AC monogram perfin.

Cuban Perfins Update (cont.)

- **A&C** – [Not to be confused with **AC**]. Conjectured as possibly being Avery & Co. without a cover by Fernández and Díaz, 2003.⁽¹⁰⁾
- **EA** – Identified as **Enrique Armaignac** without a cover by Fernández and Díaz. Subsequent covers confirm this.
- **ENC** – Identified as **Empresa Naviera de Cuba, S.A.** without a cover by Fernández and Díaz. *The Cuban Philatelist*⁽¹¹⁾ states in a note that the **ENC** perfin was on a cover owned by Alfredo Valdés (who died in 1994), but no scan was shown and it is unknown as to what has become of it.
- **FRCo** – Misidentified without a cover as **Ferrocarriles Consolidados** by Silvia García Frutos in *The Cuban Philatelist*, 2002.⁽¹²⁾ Identified as **Frank Robins Company** without a cover by Fernández and Díaz. The latter is the case.⁽¹³⁾
- **JLL** – Conjectured as possibly being **José Llano** without a cover by Fernández and Díaz.
- **M&Co** – Identified as **Monroe & Co.** without a cover by Fernández and Díaz.
- **NLY** – Identified as **New York Life Insurance Co.** without a cover by Fernández and Díaz.
- **NPT** – Identified as **National Paper and Type Company of Cuba, S.A.** without a cover by Fernández and Díaz.
- **O&C** – Identified as **Odrizola y Compañía** without a cover by Fernández and Díaz.
- **QHC** – Incorrect conjecture as possibly being Quesada y Hermanos y Cía by Fernández and Díaz even though two years earlier it was correctly identified with an illustrated cover by Rudy Roy's *The Cuban Philatelist* article⁽¹⁴⁾ as **Quiñones Hardware Corporation**.

If Fernández and Díaz have seen covers for the companies set forth above without reservation, then that leaves **A&C** (Avery & Co.?) and **JLL** (José Llano?) as not being confirmed. Until we see a cover it is impossible to say with certainty that the perfins **ENC**, **M&Co**, **NPT**, and **O&C** are correctly identified either.

That brings us to the last of the unknowns – **JFB&Co**. No one has guessed at this one in any of the literature. This author conjectures that this perfin stands for **J.F. Berndes & Co.**, a large company in late 1800's and first part of 20th century. This U.S. and Cuban company was variously identified as

being in the "machinery trade and sugar industry" and a "fertilizer" company.⁽¹⁵⁾ It was blacklisted by U.S. and Cuba in 1918 for trading with Germany. The then president of the company was Rene Berndes who was the immediate past president and founder of the Havana Rotary International Club. He was a secretary of the Havana Country Club and treasurer of the Yacht Club. A 1918 *Rotarian* newsletter stated that the separation of Rene Berndes from the Rotary Club was "taken as a war necessity and without prejudice." When you put these interesting tidbits together, it seems like a logical supposition and a large enough company to be the one that created perfin revenue stamps. Perhaps one day we will see a perfin revenue stamp on a J.F. Berndes & Co. document. Perhaps not.

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